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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
PROJECT HISTORY	3
TERMINOLOGY	5
WHO ARE THEY?	7
FREEDOM & TRUST	9
CULTURE	12
INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS	14
ISSUES	16
DELUSIONS OF E1%	20
FEDERAL GOVT MANAGERS	22
CONCLUSION	25
METHODOLOGY	26

NAPOLITAN INSTITUTE MISSION STATEMENT

We recognize that the only legitimate authority for government comes from the consent of the governed. Our mission is to amplify and magnify the voice of the American people so clearly and powerfully that it becomes the driving, framing, and shaping force for the crucial conversations of our nation.

"Never underestimate the intelligence of the voters, nor overestimate the amount of knowledge at their disposal."

-Joseph Napolitan

"In the elite political bubble, Napolitan's wise advice is not only rejected, but turned upside down. Too many political elites mistakenly believe both that voters are stupid and that they hang on every word uttered in official Washington."

-Scott Rasmussen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper summarizes original survey research documenting the views and attitudes of the Elite 1%. This very influential subset of the population consists of people who have postgraduate degrees, live in densely populated urban areas, and earn at least \$150,000 annually. The Elite 1% holds views concerning the relationship between the government and the governed that are significantly different from the voting public. However, these elitists are unaware of the gap and actually believe most voters share their views on important issues.

These results help explain the toxicity of American politics today and the longstanding lack of public trust in the federal government.

PROJECT HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

RMG Research conducts a minimum of two national public opinion surveys every week. While reviewing that data in 2023, RMG President Scott Rasmussen observed that three segments of the population were consistently out of step with most voters. These groups were voters with postgraduate degrees, voters who lived in densely populated urban areas (more than 10,000 people per square mile), and those who earned at least \$150,000 a year.

One notable example of the divide was found on the question about President Biden's job approval. As public opinion among the voting public soured on the president, the three elite segments of the population continued to offer strong approval (typically over 60%).

Initially, Scott focused on the postgraduate section of the population. While the political world often speaks of a diploma divide, it became clear that the real gap is between those with postgraduate degrees and everyone else. On many issues and political attitudes, the gap between those with postgraduate degrees and bachelor's degrees was bigger than the gap between those with bachelor's degrees and those with no college degrees.

Over time, however, Scott developed a theory that people who had all three of the elite attributes might be especially out of step with America's political mainstream. The thought was that someone with a postgraduate degree who moves to Manhattan might be different than a postgrad who moves to Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

He then developed a plan to test the theory. The challenge was that the number of voters meeting all three of the elite criteria represented only about 1% of the population. As a result, a typical survey of 1,000 registered voters provided only 5-10 respondents who possessed all three of the elite attributes.

Therefore, to develop a sufficient sample, the RMG Research team aggregated dozens of surveys that all included a question about President Biden's job approval rating. The sample included only about 300 members of the Elite 1%, but the results were stunning. Among the general public at that time, the president's job approval rating was 41%. However, among the Elite 1%, Biden's rating was twice as high at 82%.

The RMG Research team then launched a modest pilot project to see if a similar gap could be found on other issues. The sample sizes were too small to report but suggested that Scott's theory about an out of touch Elite 1% was worth exploring.

Rasmussen then sought a sponsor to conduct further research. In the fall of 2023, the Committee to Unleash Prosperity (CTUP) commissioned RMG Research to conduct a

pair of surveys measuring attitudes of the Elite 1%. As part of the study, RMG Research asked the same questions of 1,000 registered voters nationwide.

The results were released in January 2024 and first reported in the [*Wall Street Journal*](#). Gaps between elite opinion and public opinion were especially wide on questions related to individual freedom and trust in government. Additionally, the results showed that elites who talked politics on a daily basis had views that were even further removed from public opinion.

The results generated strong interest in the project which led the Napolitan Institute to commission additional research on the Elite 1%. To date, the Napolitan Institute has commissioned six surveys of the Elite 1%. Once again, the same questions were asked of 1,000 registered voters

Napolitan Institute also commissioned a separate survey of Federal Government Managers who live in the DC area. That survey was conducted to document where federal government managers aligned with the Elite 1% or with Main Street Americans on a number of issues. Every question asked of federal government managers had previously been asked of the Elite 1% and 1,000 registered voters.

This report summarizes results from all of this research to date. The Napolitan Institute plans to continue its research on the Elite 1% and related themes. The ongoing research will include additional surveys along with analysis of other data.

TERMINOLOGY

The Napolitan Institute has developed a specific terminology to define various subsets of both the Elite 1% and everyday Americans.

Elite 1%: Have postgraduate degrees, earn more than \$150,000 annually, and live in densely populated areas (10,000 people per square mile in their zip codes). An extremely influential group, they represent approximately 1% of the U.S. population. Members of the Elite 1% tend to place a lot of trust in government, and many are concerned there is too much individual freedom in America.

Main Street Americans: This group, representing approximately 70-75% of the U.S. population, are the antithesis of the Elite 1%. They have none of the three attributes of the Elite 1%. They do NOT have postgraduate degrees, do NOT live in densely populated urban areas, and earn LESS than \$150,000 annually. On many foundational issues, the gap between Main Street views and Elite 1% views is enormous. Main Street Americans have little trust in government, and most believe there is not enough individual freedom in America today.

Elite Adjacent: This group sits between Main Street and the Elite 1%. They have at least one of the three Elite 1% attributes, but not all of them. On many issues, their attitudes are different from Main Street views but not as extreme as the Elite 1%. One reason for tracking this group is that a credible sample of Elite Adjacent voters can be found in a standard national opinion survey of approximately 1,000 voters. Where sizable gaps on a topic exist between Main Street and Elite Adjacent Americans, it may be an indication of an especially large gap between Main Street and the Elite 1%.

Ivy Plus Schools: This refers to a list of 16 elite colleges and universities: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, University of Chicago, UC Berkeley, Johns Hopkins, MIT, Cornell, Northwestern, Dartmouth, Brown, Caltech, and Duke.

A significant portion of the Elite 1% have attended at least one of these schools at the graduate or undergraduate level. On many issues, they hold views that are further removed from the general public than other members of the Elite 1%.

In the earliest version of research on the Elite 1%, a similar category was defined focused on only 12 schools. Earlier research by [Thomas R. Dye](#) found that half of the political, corporate, and philanthropic elites attended one of those 12 schools.

Federal Government Managers: For Napolitan Institute surveys, Federal Government Managers are defined as federal employees living in the National Capitol Region and earning at least \$75,000 annually.

Politically Active: People who talk politics every day or nearly every day. Among voters, approximately 8% talk politics daily. Among the Elite 1%, that total is generally in the 25% to 30% range. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 13% talk politics daily.

Politically Engaged: This includes people who talk politics daily and those who talk politics on most days. Among voters, approximately 31% are politically engaged. Among the Elite 1%, that total is generally around 65%. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 39% are politically engaged.

Politically Disengaged: People who discuss politics once a week or less. Among voters, roughly 68% fall into this category including 28% who talk politics rarely or never. Among the Elite 1%, approximately 35% talk politics once a week or less. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 59% are politically disengaged.

WHO ARE THEY?

The Elite 1% share three attributes: they have postgraduate degrees, make at least \$150,000, and live in densely populated urban areas (10,000 people per square mile or more in their zip codes). Approximately one percent of the population meets this definition.

Only 9% of the Elite 1% consider themselves to be elites. However, 66% see themselves as either upper class or upper middle class. Twenty-one percent (21%) see themselves as middle class and 4% say working class.¹

Interestingly, among the Elite 1% who talk politics daily, there is much greater awareness of the elite status. Among this subset of the Elite 1%, 25% consider themselves to be in the elite segments of society.

Demographics

The Elite 1% are largely male (68%), aged 35-54 (67%), and white (77%).²

It seems reasonable to believe that a number of the Elite Adjacent belonged to the Elite 1% at some point in their lives. For example, an older member of the Elite Adjacent population may have moved out of a densely populated urban area. Or, a retired member of the Elite Adjacent may have a lower income.

The Elite Adjacent population is 51% male and 49% female. In this group, 38% are aged 35-54, and 52% are white.³

The Main Street population is 46% male and 54% female. Just 28% of Main Street Americans are in the 35-54 age bracket, and 76% are white.⁴

Financially, the Elite 1% are clearly better off than most Americans. In September 2023, 40% of registered voters said their personal finances were getting worse. Only 20% thought they were getting better. However, among the Elite 1%, 74% said their finances were getting better.⁵

This may help explain the large amount of media commentary expressing frustration that voters didn't recognize how good the economy was. For elites who helped establish the media narrative, the economy was good. For Main Street Americans, it was not.

Politics

Politically, the Elite 1% are strongly aligned with the Democratic Party (70% D, 21% R).⁶ Among the Elite Adjacent, 53% are Democrats and 36% Republicans.⁷ In contrast, a plurality of Main Street Americans are Republican (48% R, 43% D).⁸

¹ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

² Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

³ Data from survey of 3,000 registered voters, July 29-31, 2024

⁴ Data from survey of 3,000 registered voters, July 29-31, 2024

⁵ CTUP survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 11-26, 2023

⁶ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

⁷ Data from survey of 3,000 registered voters, July 29-31, 2024

⁸ Data from survey of 3,000 registered voters, July 29-31, 2024

The political divide helps explain the gap in job approval ratings. In early March 2024, 44% of registered voters nationwide approved of the way President Biden was performing his job. Among members of the Elite 1%, approval was at 76%.⁹

At that same time, a plurality of voters (47%) expected former President Trump would defeat President Biden in the November election. Among the Elite 1%, however, the view was decidedly different. By a 62% to 25% margin, the elites expected a Biden victory.¹⁰ Even after the June 27 debate which led Biden to withdraw from the race, 44% of the Elite 1% still thought Biden would win.¹¹

⁹ Data from survey of 2,000 registered voters, March 11-14, 2024 and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

¹⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, February 21-22, 2024 and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

¹¹ Data from survey of 500 elites, July 18-21, 2024

FREEDOM AND TRUST

The foundational issues dividing the Elite 1% from Main Street America revolve around issues of individual freedom and trust. The divide is even deeper between the Politically Active Elites and the rest of the nation.

Most voters (57%) – and most Main Street Americans (62%) – believe there is *not enough* individual freedom in America today. However, a solid plurality (47%) of the Elite 1% believe there is *too much* individual freedom. Among the Politically Active members of the Elite 1%, the numbers are even more alarming: 69% believe the American people have too much individual freedom.¹²

<i>Does the United States provide too much individual freedom, too much government control, or is the balance about right?</i>				
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites	Main Street
Far too much freedom	4%	28%	58%	4%
Somewhat too much freedom	12%	19%	11%	9%
Somewhat too much government control	30%	13%	6%	33%
Far too much government control	27%	8%	6%	29%
About the right balance	21%	29%	18%	18%
Not sure	6%	2%	1%	6%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.				

Closely related to that dynamic is the fact that just 22% of voters trust the federal government to do the right thing most of the time.¹³ In sharp contrast, 70% of the Elite 1% express such trust. Among the Politically Active Elites, that figure rises to 89%.¹⁴

¹² Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 18-19, 2023 and of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2023

¹³ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024

¹⁴ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2023

<i>Generally speaking, how often do you trust the federal government to do the right thing?</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Just about all of the time	1%	33%	64%
Most of the time	21%	37%	25%
Only some of the time	45%	23%	8%
Rarely or never	32%	7%	3%
Not sure	0%	1%	0%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

There appear to be two reasons for this trust gap. One, to be addressed later in this report, is that managers of the federal government tend to have views more closely aligned with the Elites than with the voters. In other words, the Elites see a representative government; voters don't.

The second reason is that voters see the government as a distant entity that ignores them. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of voters say that the federal government pays too little attention to what voters want. Only 9% think the government pays too much attention.¹⁵

The Quality of Congressional Representation

While everyone is supposed to be represented in Congress, only 15% of voters have met their own representative. Only 31% believe their own representative is the best person for the job, and few think their representative is listening. If a voter cared deeply about an issue, only 11% think it is very likely they could get a meeting with their own representative and have their views seriously considered.¹⁶

The Elite 1% have a completely different framework. Most (51%) have already met their representative and a third (33%) are confident their representative would listen to them. Among the Politically Active elites, 73% have met their representative and 65% are confident their views will be seriously considered.¹⁷

¹⁵ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 6-7, 2024

¹⁶ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024

¹⁷ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

<i>Suppose there was an issue you cared deeply about. How likely is it that your representative in Congress would meet with you to discuss the issue and give serious consideration to your views?</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Very likely	11%	33%	65%
Somewhat likely	24%	35%	22%
Not very likely	28%	20%	10%
Not at all likely	21%	7%	4%
Not sure	15%	5%	0%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

Distrust of Voters

It's important to recognize that distrust goes both ways. A strong plurality of the Politically Active Elites (46%) believe the government pays *too much* attention to what voters think. Only 32% think it pays too little attention.¹⁸

<i>When establishing policies and regulations, does the federal government pay too much attention to what voters want or not enough attention to what voters want?</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Too much attention to what voters want	9%	25%	46%
Not enough attention to what voters want	77%	47%	32%
About the right balance	8%	25%	22%
Not sure	9%	2%	0%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

The distrust of voters runs so deep that half (51%) of the Elite 1% think people without a college degree should not be allowed to vote. Among the Politically Active Elites, 69% think the nation would be better off if only people with a college degree were allowed to vote.¹⁹

What's especially troubling about this attitude is that 63% of Politically Active Elites think Congress would be more representative if it had more members without college degrees.²⁰ This suggests that many Politically Active Elites believe that the country would be better off with a less representative government.

¹⁸ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 6-7, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

¹⁹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 6-7, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

²⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, December 20-21, 2023, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

Who Do The Elites Trust?

When it comes to establishing major government regulations, 52% of the Elite 1% trust government agencies and policy experts more than voters and their elected representatives. Thirty-nine percent (39%) take the opposite view.²¹

Among the Politically Active Elites, 56% trust government agencies and policy experts more than voters and their elected representatives.²²

Not surprisingly, Main Street Americans take the opposite perspective. By a two-to-one margin (55% to 24%) they place their trust in voters and their elected representatives.²³

<i>Who do you trust more when it comes to establishing major regulations: government agencies and policy experts or voters and their elected representatives?</i>			
	Elites	Pol Active Elites	Main Street
Gov agencies and policy experts	52%	56%	24%
Voters and their elected reps	39%	40%	55%
Not sure	8%	3%	20%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

CULTURE

It's important to note that the differences between the Elite 1% and the American people have created entirely different cultures and norms.

Among the Elite 1%, half (49%) believe it is more honorable to work for the government than to work for a company in the private sector. Among the Politically Active Elites, 60% hold that view.²⁴

<i>Generally speaking, is it more honorable to work for the government than to work for a company in the private sector?</i>			
	Elites	Pol Active Elites	Main Street
Yes	49%	60%	14%
No	38%	32%	56%
Not sure	14%	7%	30%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

²¹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, January 22-23, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

²² Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

²³ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, January 22-23, 2024

²⁴ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

However, the view that government work is more honorable is hard to find outside of the elite circle. Only 14% of Main Street voters agree with that assessment. In contrast, 56% of Main Street voters think private sector workers work harder than government employees. Just 6% think those on the public payroll work harder.²⁵

The different cultural expectations are found beyond the specifics of government policy. As shown below, members of the Elite 1% have very favorable opinions of university professors, lawyers, union leaders, journalists, and members of Congress. The numbers are even higher among the Politically Active Elites.²⁶

But the perceptions of the general public are wildly different. For example, 71% of Politically Active Elites have very favorable opinions of journalists. Only 10% of voters share that assessment. For university professors, the numbers are 76% and 17% respectively.²⁷

<i>Do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of each of the following?</i>			
<i>Those answering Very Favorable</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
University Professors	17%	57%	76%
Lawyers	11%	41%	68%
Union Leaders	8%	42%	71%
Journalists	10%	42%	71%
Members of Congress	6%	39%	69%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

The clashing cultures result in different practices as well. Only 10% of voters have introduced themselves by expressing their preferred pronouns. Among the Elite 1%, more than four out of ten have done so. Among the Politically Active Elites, 61% have introduced themselves by expressing their preferred pronouns.²⁸

These cultural divides reinforce the political divides.

²⁵ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024

²⁶ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 11-16, 2023

²⁷ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 18-19, 2023, and of 1,000 elites, September 11-16, 2023

²⁸ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 6-7, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS—Free Speech and Guns

The gaps between voters and elites are especially wide on issues related to the First and Second Amendments to the United States Constitution.

Free Speech

Concerns about fake news and disinformation are shared by voters (76%), the Elite 1% (84%), and the Politically Active Elites (85%).²⁹

However, that's where the common ground ends. Voters, by a 59% to 34% margin, believe that letting the government decide what counts as misinformation is more dangerous than the disinformation itself. Among the Elite 1%, the numbers are reversed: by a 57% to 39% margin, they see letting the government decide as the lesser problem.³⁰

It should be noted that some of this divide can be attributed to the differing levels of trust in government. Most voters don't trust the government and therefore see government monitoring of speech as a real threat. Most of the Elite 1% trust the government and see unregulated speech as the bigger concern.

This trust divide shows up again in a question about whether or not the federal government intentionally promotes disinformation to advance its own agenda. By a 51% to 23% margin, voters say yes, it does. By a mirror image 52% to 35%, the Elite 1% disagrees.³¹

The gap is much wider when it comes to giving the government power to censor social media posts. By a four-to-one margin (69% to 16%) voters nationwide say that the federal government should not be allowed to have such power.³²

Among the Elite 1%, opinion is divided on the question: 43% say the government should be allowed to censor social media posts while 45% disagree.³³

Among the Politically Active Elites, 53% believe the government should be allowed to censor social media posts, while 39% disagree.³⁴

²⁹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

³⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

³¹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

³² Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024

³³ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

³⁴ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

<i>Should the federal government be allowed to censor speech that is posted on social media platforms?</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Yes	16%	43%	53%
No	69%	45%	39%
Not sure	15%	12%	8%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

Gun Laws

The biggest gap between Main Street Americans and the Elite 1% may be on issues about guns.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the Elite 1% would prefer to live in communities where guns are outlawed. Most voters (51%) take the opposite view and would prefer to live in communities where guns are allowed.³⁵

<i>Would you rather live in a community where guns are outlawed or in a community where people are allowed to own guns?</i>		
	Voters	Elites
One where guns are outlawed	35%	72%
One where people are allowed to own guns	51%	23%
Not sure	14%	4%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.		

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the Elite 1% favors banning private ownership of guns. Most voters (56%) oppose such a ban.³⁶

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the Elite 1% believe banning guns would make our communities safer. Fifty-two percent (52%) of voters believe banning private ownership of guns would make our communities less safe.³⁷

³⁵ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024, and of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

³⁶ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024, and of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

³⁷ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024, and of 500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

ISSUES

There are significant gaps between the Elite 1% on matters related to climate change, education, transgender issues, the Middle East War, and other topics.

Climate Change

For the Elite 1%, fighting climate change is an urgent top priority.

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the Elite 1% favor strict restrictions and rationing on the private use of gas, meat, and electricity. Sixty-three percent (63%) of voters are opposed.³⁸

As for specifics, most of the Elite 1% favor banning gas powered cars (72%), gas stoves (69%), SUV's (58%), non-essential air travel (55%), and private air conditioning (53%). Among the Politically Active Elites, support for banning those items ranges from 82% to 87%.³⁹

Among voters, however, between 70% and 83% oppose banning each of those items.⁴⁰

<i>To fight climate change, would you favor or oppose each of the following?</i>			
<i>Those who favor</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Banning gas powered cars	24%	72%	88%
Banning gas stoves	25%	69%	87%
Banning SUVs	16%	58%	84%
Eliminating all but essential airline travel	22%	55%	84%
Banning private air conditioning	13%	53%	82%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

When asked what they would be willing to pay annually to fight climate change, 72% of voters say \$100 or less. That includes 40% who aren't willing to pay anything. Only 13% would be willing to pay \$1,000 or more.⁴¹

In contrast, only 30% of the Elite 1% would be willing to pay no more than \$100 (including 10% who aren't willing to pay anything). Thirty-nine percent (39%) are willing to pay \$1,000 or more.⁴²

³⁸ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 18-19, 2023, and of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2023

³⁹ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2023

⁴⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 18-19, 2023

⁴¹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, February 23-24, 2023

⁴² Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2023

The numbers are even more dramatic for the Politically Active Elites. Half (47%) are willing to pay \$1,000 or more. Only 8% are unwilling to pay anything.⁴³

Education

Most voters (62%) say that parents have too little control over the education of their children. Only 17% say they have too much control.⁴⁴

Among the Elite 1%, 39% say parents have too much control, and 26% say not enough.⁴⁵

Once again, the numbers are more extreme among Politically Active Elites. Among this influential group, 50% say parents have too much control, and only 17% say too little.⁴⁶

<i>Do parents have too much control over their children's education? Not enough control? Or is the balance about right?</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Far too much control	5%	13%	25%
Somewhat too much control	12%	26%	25%
Somewhat too little control	31%	16%	9%
Far too little control	31%	10%	8%
About the right balance	14%	32%	33%
Not sure	17%	3%	0%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

Voters and elites overwhelmingly agree that everyone who graduates high school should be able to read, write, and function as an adult in society. However, there is a difference of opinion about what to do if students finish high school without those skills.

Among voters, just 14% say they should be allowed to graduate. Among the Elite 1% that number rises to 28%. And, among the Politically Active Elites, 49% think they should be allowed to graduate even if they don't have the skills required for graduation.⁴⁷

⁴³ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2023

⁴⁴ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 25-26, 2024

⁴⁵ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁴⁶ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁴⁷ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, January 10-11, 2024, and of 1,500 elites; March 6-12, 2024

Transgender Issues

There is a massive gap between Main Street Americans and the Elite 1% on the question of allowing biological males to compete in women's sports.

If a biological male identifies as a woman, just 17% of Main Street voters believe that person should be allowed to compete in women's sports.⁴⁸

Among the Elite 1%, 29% believe such athletes should be allowed to compete in women's sports. On top of that, 41% of the Politically Active Elites believe they should be allowed to compete.⁴⁹

<i>Should biological males who identify as women be allowed to compete in women's sports events?</i>			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites
Yes	17%	29%	41%
No	72%	58%	51%
Not sure	11%	13%	8%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.			

Similar numbers are found on questions about biological males using girl's bathrooms and locker rooms. Forty-three percent (43%) of Politically Active Elites think this should be allowed. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of voters are opposed.⁵⁰

There are large gaps on other transgender issues as well. Only 9% of voters favor a regulation being developed by the Biden Administration that would make misgendering a co-worker a fireable offense. Seventy-five percent (75%) of voters are opposed.⁵¹

While most members of the Elite 1% also oppose that policy, it is supported by 18% of the Elite 1% and by 30% of the Politically Active Elites.⁵²

If a child expresses an interest in changing his or her gender identity, the Elite 1% is divided as to whether teachers should be prohibited from notifying the child's parents. Forty-nine percent (49%) favor such a prohibition while 46% are opposed. Among the Politically Active Elites, 74% favor that prohibition.⁵³

⁴⁸ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, May 14-15, 2024

⁴⁹ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, March 6-7, 2024

⁵⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, February 13-14, 2024, and of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

⁵¹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, October 30-31, 2023

⁵² Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

⁵³ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, June 13-14, 2023

Israel v Palestine

Among the Elite 1% there is more support for Israel than for the Palestinian groups. Forty-four percent (44%) believe the United States should support Israel while 19% think our nation should support the Palestinian groups.⁵⁴

However, when the campus protests began in the spring, there was a massive disconnect between the Elite 1% and voters. Sixty-one percent (61%) of Main Street Americans disapproved of the protestors, while 61% of the Elite 1% expressed their approval.⁵⁵

<i>Do you approve or disapprove of the recent protests on college campuses supporting the Palestinians?</i>				
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites	Main Street
Strongly approve	9%	32%	47%	8%
Somewhat approve	15%	29%	15%	12%
Somewhat disapprove	23%	19%	16%	24%
Strongly disapprove	35%	16%	18%	37%
Not sure	17%	4%	3%	18%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.				

Additionally, by a 45% to 27% margin, Main Street Americans believe the protests were marred by violence. Among the Elite 1%, most (56%) described the protests as peaceful. Just 35% thought they were marred by violence.⁵⁶

<i>Have most of the campus protests been peaceful or have they been marred by violence?</i>				
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active Elites	Main Street
Peaceful	30%	56%	56%	27%
Marred by violence	44%	35%	39%	45%
Not sure	26%	9%	4%	28%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.				

⁵⁴ Data from survey of 500 elites, May 1-6, 2024

⁵⁵ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, May 6-7, 2024, and of 500 elites, May 1-6, 2024

⁵⁶ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, May 6-7, 2024, and of 500 elites, May 1-6, 2024

China

Most voters (56%) see China as an enemy of the United States. However, among the Elite 1%, opinion is more divided. Twenty-nine percent (29%) see China as an ally and 44% as an enemy.⁵⁷

Stunningly, 54% of the Politically Active Elites see China as an ally.⁵⁸

Other

By a four-to-one margin (76% to 19%) voters say providing good jobs for people without college degrees is more important than making sure everyone can go to college. Among the Politically Active Elites, opinion is divided: 56% say good jobs are most important while 44% say letting everyone go to college matters more.⁵⁹

Voters are evenly divided as to whether racism is a bigger problem than government efforts to fight racism. Given the Elite 1%'s trust in government, it's not surprising that 69% of them see racism itself as the bigger problem.⁶⁰

In a similar vein, voters are evenly divided as to whether well-intentioned government programs do more harm than good. The Elite 1%, however, reject that view by a two-to-one margin (60% to 32%).⁶¹

DELUSIONS OF THE ELITE 1%

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of our research on the Elite 1% is that members of this group don't realize how out of touch they are.

For example, while acknowledging that no two people agree on everything, 49% of voters believe most other voters share their views on important issues. There's probably a degree of truth to that belief, since there is far more common ground among voters than is commonly acknowledged in the public dialogue.⁶²

At the same time, two thirds (65%) of the Elite 1% – and 82% of Politically Active Elites – think most voters agree with them on important issues.⁶³ As has been documented throughout this report, that is far from an accurate assessment.

Our research found that a significant part of the problem is that elites have little understanding of what voters believe.

- Sixty-five percent (65%) of the Elite 1% believe most voters trust the federal government to do the right thing most of the time.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 20-21, 2023, and of 1,000 elites, September 14-29, 2023

⁵⁸ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 14-29, 2023

⁵⁹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, January 10-11, 2024, and of 1,000 elites, June 13-14, 2023

⁶⁰ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁶¹ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁶² Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, February 7-8, 2024

⁶³ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

⁶⁴ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

- In reality, just 22% of voters have such trust.⁶⁵
 - In fact, it's been more than half a century since a majority of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing most of the time.⁶⁶
- Thirty-seven percent (37%) of Elites, and 53% of politically obsessed elites, believe that most voters favor regulations that will effectively outlaw the manufacture and sale of gasoline powered cars.⁶⁷
 - In reality, just 34% of voters favor such regulations.⁶⁸
- Sixty-one percent (61%) of Elites say that most voters believe their representative in Congress is the best person for the job.⁶⁹
 - Only 31% of voters actually hold that belief.⁷⁰
- Another example is found on the question of whether voters would prefer to live in communities where guns are allowed or where guns are outlawed. Surveys consistently show that a majority of voters would rather live in communities where guns are allowed.⁷¹ Despite this, 59% of the Elite 1% believe that most voters want to live in communities where guns are outlawed.⁷²
- On a different topic, 24% of voters favor laws that will effectively outlaw the sale of gasoline powered cars. But, just over half (54%) of the Elite 1% recognize that reality.⁷³
 - Even worse, most Politically Active Elites (53%) mistakenly believe voters support such regulations to eliminate gasoline powered cars.⁷⁴
 - Sixty-four percent (64%) believe most voters are willing to pay more than \$250 a year to fight climate change.⁷⁵

These delusional understandings of public opinion are especially worrisome since they provide a rationalization for elites to bend the rules in pursuit of their own agenda. If they believe (or convince themselves to believe) that most voters agree with them, then they are bending the rules on behalf of the people.

A particularly dramatic example of this dynamic was found in a question asking voters how they would respond if their preferred candidate lost a close election. If their campaign team thought they could get away with cheating to win, 7% of voters would want their team to cheat.⁷⁶

Among the Elite 1%, the support for cheating rose to 35%. And, among the Politically Active Elites, 69% would want their team to cheat rather than accept voters' decisions.⁷⁷

⁶⁵ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024

⁶⁶ Pew research data

⁶⁷ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁶⁸ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, April 20-22, 2023

⁶⁹ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁷⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, July 6-8, 2022

⁷¹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024

⁷² Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁷³ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁷⁴ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁷⁵ Data from survey of 500 elites, May 1-6, 2024

⁷⁶ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, August 24-25, 2023

⁷⁷ Data from survey of 1,000 elites, September 11-26, 2024

Totals							
		Elites		Republican		Democrat	
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active	Voters	Elites	Voters	Elite
Win by cheating	7%	35%	69%	8%	30%	8%	38%
Lose by playing fair	82%	60%	28%	88%	62%	82%	59%
Not sure	11%	5%	4%	4%	7%	11%	3%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.							

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

In conjunction with the Elite 1% project, the Napolitan Institute sponsored a survey of 500 Federal Government Managers in the DC area. Broadly speaking, these government leaders held views closer to those of the Elite 1% than those of voters.

For example, 51% of Federal Government Managers believe there is too much individual freedom in America. Among the Elite 1%, that figure is 47%. Only 16% of voters share that view.

Totals														
		Elites					Republican				Democrat			
	Voters	Elites	Pol Active	Gov Mng	Main street	Voters	Elites	Main street	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Main street	Gov Mng	
Far too much freedom	4%	28%	58%	17%	4%	3%	25%	3%	8%	7%	31%	8%	24%	
Somewhat too much freedom	12%	19%	11%	34%	9%	8%	18%	7%	25%	13%	20%	11%	44%	
Somewhat too much government control	30%	13%	6%	20%	33%	32%	21%	35%	24%	28%	11%	33%	17%	
Far too much government control	27%	8%	6%	11%	29%	41%	18%	41%	21%	11%	4%	12%	1%	
About the right balance	21%	29%	18%	17%	18%	12%	19%	11%	20%	33%	32%	27%	12%	
Not sure	6%	2%	1%	2%	6%	4%	0%	4%	2%	7%	2%	9%	1%	
Source: RMG Research, Inc.														

One major difference between the Elite 1% and Federal Government Managers is their partisan affiliation. While the Elite 1% are overwhelmingly aligned with the Democratic party, Federal Government Managers are evenly divided: 44% are Democrats and 43% are Republican.

On political topics such as the president's job approval rating, there is a gap between Republican managers and Democratic managers. However, it should be noted that for both parties, the views of Federal Government Managers are closer to the Elites than to voters in their party.

<i>Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Biden is performing his job?</i>									
		Elites		Republican			Democrat		
	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng	Voters	Elites	Gov Mng
Strongly approve	20%	46%	28%	4%	13%	13%	39%	47%	47%
Somewhat approve	22%	30%	30%	6%	17%	17%	39%	39%	39%
Somewhat disapprove	15%	10%	23%	13%	27%	27%	13%	12%	12%
Strongly disapprove	41%	13%	20%	77%	43%	43%	7%	1%	1%
Not sure	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Source: RMG Research, Inc.									

Fifty-four percent (54%) of government managers say that if, after carefully researching an important issue, they determine that a regulation is needed, yet voters overwhelmingly oppose it, they should follow their research and issue the regulation anyway. This includes 49% of Republican government managers and 60% of Democrats.⁷⁸ Just 17% of Elites⁷⁹ and 12% of registered voters⁸⁰ agree this is the right thing to do.

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of government managers - 37% of Republicans and 42% of Democrats - say that it would be better for America if only people with college degrees were allowed to vote.⁸¹ Fifty-one percent (51%) of the Elite 1% shares this view,⁸² while just 15% of all voters believe this to be true.⁸³

When it comes to education, 46% of federal government managers believe that parents have too much control.⁸⁴ Thirty-nine percent (39%) of Elites share this view,⁸⁵ but just 17% of voters agree.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ Data from survey of 504 federal government managers, May 1-15, 2024

⁷⁹ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

⁸⁰ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, January 22-23, 2024

⁸¹ Data from survey of 504 federal government managers, May 1-15, 2024

⁸² Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁸³ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 6-7, 2024

⁸⁴ Data from survey of 504 federal government managers, May 1-15, 2024

⁸⁵ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁸⁶ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 25-26, 2024

However, on many topics, there is a disturbing level of bi-partisan agreement among federal government managers. Fifty-three percent (53%) of Republican government managers and 48% of Democrats believe the federal government should be allowed to censor speech that is posted on social media platforms.⁸⁷ Forty-three percent (43%) of Elites⁸⁸ and just 16% of voters share this view.⁸⁹

Seventy-four percent of Republican government managers and 79% of Democrats favor banning private ownership of guns.⁹⁰ This view is shared by 77% of Elites,⁹¹ but just 36% of voters.⁹²

Looking beyond the topline, it becomes clear that the views of government managers from both parties are closer to the views of their elites than those of the voters.

⁸⁷ Data from survey of 504 federal government managers, May 1-15, 2024

⁸⁸ Data from survey of 1,500 elites, March 6-12, 2024

⁸⁹ Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 26-27, 2024

⁹⁰ Data from survey of 504 federal government managers, May 1-15, 2024

⁹¹ Data from survey of 500 elites, April 23-28, 2024

⁹² Data from survey of 1,000 registered voters, March 11-12, 2024

CONCLUSION

Our initial research on the Elite 1% has shown that the views of this influential segment of the population are significantly different from the views of most Americans. A foundational difference is that most Americans believe that there is too little individual freedom in America. Few among the Elite 1% share that view.

There is nothing wrong with segments of society holding different views. In fact, that's to be expected in a free society. However, the Elite 1% hold tremendous institutional and media power that amplifies their voices at the expense of the American people.

That institutional power is enhanced by the alliance between the Elite 1% and the unelected managers of the federal government. Those Administrative State officials tend to share the elite belief that there is too much individual freedom in America. Our preliminary research suggests that those government officials seek the consent of the Elite 1% rather than the consent of the governed.

Making matters worse, the Elite 1% don't recognize how out of touch they are with the rest of the nation. They project their own views on the public and tend to believe that most voters agree with them on important issues. But, as our research has documented, nothing could be further from the truth.

Having mistakenly convinced themselves that most voters share their views, the politically active elites use their institutional power to help drive a political narrative and agenda that is contrary to the views and values of the American people. That naturally leads to resistance from voters whose voices are being ignored.

As a result, the views and influence of the Elite 1% may be the root cause of the political toxicity in our nation today. Their underlying attitudes reflect an implicit rejection of the founding ideal that governments derive their only just authority from the consent of the governed.

Methodology

To measure the gap between Registered Voters and the Elite 1%, identical questions were asked on separate surveys of both groups. All surveys were conducted online by Scott Rasmussen. Field work for the surveys was conducted by RMG Research, Inc.

Elites were defined as having postgraduate degrees, having household incomes of more than \$150,000 annually, and living in zip codes with more than 10,000 people per square mile. Approximately 1% of the total U.S. population meets these criteria.

These parameters were determined after the observation of numerous surveys indicated that these elite segments of the population consistently exhibited views that were distinct from the general population. The Elite 1% samples are lightly weighted by gender, age, and race to reflect the demographic profile established through surveys of registered voters.

For the registered voter surveys, quotas were applied, and the sample was lightly weighted by geography, gender, age, race, education, internet usage, and political party to reasonably reflect the nation's population of registered voters. Other variables were reviewed to ensure that the final samples are representative of that population.

The first two surveys of the Elite 1% referred to in this report were paid for by the Committee to Unleash Prosperity. All other research was paid for by the Napolitan Institute.